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General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 December 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 52

Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986

The Acting President: It is my understanding that after the necessary consultations consideration of this item may be deferred to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of the item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 52.

Agenda item 53

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 53.

Agenda item 54

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

98-86632 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 54.

Agenda item 55

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

The Acting President: It is my understanding that there has been no request to consider this item at the present session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 55.

Agenda item 56

Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the Assembly's wish to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 56.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.31, A/53/L.64)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Senegal to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.64.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): I should like on behalf of the African Group to submit to the General Assembly for its consideration draft resolution A/53/L.64, entitled "Special assistance to Central and East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons", under agenda item 20 (b). Broadly speaking, this procedural text echoes language adopted in resolution 52/169 B on the same item.

A positive feature of this year's draft resolution is that the special assistance relates not only to Central African but also to East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The draft resolution notes that those countries, which are receiving a great number of refugees and displaced persons, are also among the least developed countries and therefore continue to experience an extremely critical economic situation.

Despite all the efforts deployed by agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the Organization of African Unity, the situation of these refugees remains precarious and it is urgent that the security situation in the region be improved.

While thanking the Central and East African countries which have made enormous sacrifices by receiving these refugees, the African Group considers that humanitarian assistance for these refugees and displaced persons should be substantially increased in the light of the magnitude of their needs and because of the need to create conditions conducive to a lasting improvement in their situation.

The draft resolution congratulates the Secretary-General for the efforts he has made to draw the attention of the international community to the situation of refugees in the Central and East African countries, and expresses gratitude to States, organizations, bodies and non-governmental organizations that have delivered financial, technical and material assistance to those refugees.

The draft resolution urges the Governments of the region to provide safe and unhindered access for United Nations and other humanitarian personnel to the populations in need, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The text of this draft resolution was negotiated with representatives of donor countries and other interested parties. The United States of America and India have joined my country in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.64, for which, on behalf of Africa, we thank them. We would request the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritania to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.31.

Mr. Ould Mohamed (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia" (A/53/L.31).

I would first like to inform the General Assembly that in addition to the countries listed in document A/53/L.31, the following countries have also become sponsors: China, the Comoros, Djibouti, India, Italy and Mauritania.

Allow me now to present some of the key ideas of this draft resolution.

In the first and second preambular paragraphs the Assembly would recall all the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on emergency assistance to Somalia.

The fourth preambular paragraph notes the continued efforts of the Secretary-General to assist the Somali people to promote peace, stability and national reconciliation.

The draft resolution refers to the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/344) in its seventh preambular paragraph. It also notes that the fragility of State infrastructure impedes reconciliation in Somalia and stresses the need for rehabilitation and for the establishment of institutions in order to bring about the reconstruction of the country. The Assembly would also recall the importance of implementing resolution 47/160.

Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution expresses the gratitude of the General Assembly to all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have assisted Somalia.

Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 express appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Movement of Non-Aligned countries and others for their efforts to resolve the situation in Somalia.

Operative paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 indicate that it is the Somali people who are primarily responsible for the rehabilitation of the country and appeal to them to achieve national reconciliation allowing for transition from relief to reconstruction and development.

The Assembly would also call upon Somalia to respect fully the security and safety of personnel of the United Nations and to permit their complete freedom of movement throughout the country.

Lastly, operative paragraphs 9 and 11 request the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize international humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Somalia and to present a report on this matter to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

In conclusion, on behalf of the sponsors, I wish to thank all the countries that have contributed to the preparation of this draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus, as have corresponding ones in previous years.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolutions contained in documents A/53/L.31 and A/53/L.64.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.31, entitled "Assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.31 was adopted (resolution 53/1 M).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.64, entitled "Special assistance to Central and East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.64 was adopted (resolution 53/1 N).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

Agenda item 43

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/564)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.57)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/732)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.57.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of all the members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti — Argentina, Canada, Chile, France, the United States and Venezuela — I have the pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.57, which is now before the Assembly. The following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Barbados, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom.

This draft resolution pays tribute to the people of Haiti for its steadfast search for solid and lasting democracy with justice and economic prosperity. It also supports the continued work of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to further Haiti's political progress.

The draft resolution also takes note with appreciation of the efforts made by various countries to provide humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation to the people of Haiti. At the same time, it supports fully the contributions made by the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) and its Executive Director and personnel, as well as the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), in establishing a climate of freedom and tolerance conducive to respect for human rights and the full restoration of constitutional democracy in Haiti.

The draft also reflects the international community's concern at the political stalemate resulting from the fact that Haiti has had no Prime Minister for almost 18 months now, which undermines the development and consolidation of democratic institutions in Haiti. In this respect, it urges Haitian authorities and political leaders to continue their efforts to find a compromise that will put an end to the current crisis.

The draft resolution welcomes the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his most recent report on the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti to extend the mandate of the United Nations component of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti until 31 December 1999. It also reaffirms the commitment of the international community to continue to provide technical, economic and financial cooperation to Haiti in order to support and promote its economic and social development and to strengthen the institutions responsible for dispensing justice and guaranteeing democracy, respect for human rights, political stability and economic development.

The United Nations presence in Haiti in the form of its component in the International Civilian Mission and the Civilian Police Mission is not in itself a guarantee that the difficulties being experienced by Haitian society will be resolved in the near future. However, Venezuela is convinced that with the support of the missions and of the international community as a whole, Haiti will continue to advance towards the consolidation of democracy in a climate of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The achievements that we have seen in these areas bear this out.

To withdraw international participation from Haiti at this time would be to reverse the process of institutional consolidation which, albeit fragile, has already borne fruit. MICIVIH's presence continues to be decisive in this process. For this reason, we are confident that in adopting this draft resolution we will be supporting the continued development of Haitian institutions and, ultimately, the establishment of democracy in Haiti on a secure footing.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland and Liechtenstein — align themselves with this statement.

A few weeks after democratic rule was restored in Haiti in 1994, the European Union (EU) joined international efforts to support and strengthen the country's democratic process. As democratization and good governance constitute key priorities for the Union, we are committed to assist Haiti in building democratic institutions, reforming its judiciary and creating an efficient civil service. Consequently, the Union is financing projects in those fields.

In this context, I should like to mention the EU structural adjustment support programmes for Government ministries and our substantial contribution to the establishment of the Commission on Truth and Justice in this regard.

Furthermore, substantial resources have been made available for emergency assistance and for rehabilitation programmes to rebuild Haiti's infrastructure and power-generation capacity, as well as for a number of smaller projects. Today, the Union is the largest donor in Haiti, with contributions from the European Community budget amounting to some 300 million ECUs — $351 million — on top of assistance from individual Member States.

The European Union remains gravely concerned at the continuing constitutional crisis and political stalemate in Haiti and their repercussions on the rehabilitation, economic recovery and development processes, which would benefit enormously from political stabilization. We would like to stress that external assistance and public and private investments can produce sustainable results only if good governance and the rule of law provide the necessary preconditions for economic and social progress. Otherwise, the efforts made and monies spent will be considered as wasted, with negative consequences for future support and investments.

The European Union expressed its satisfaction at the holding of free and fair elections in 1995 and 1996. However, we were concerned at the atmosphere surrounding the electoral process in 1997. The political situation following the resignation of the Government has not improved since that time, which is a matter of utmost concern to us. We deplore the fact that, in a period of 18 months, no progress has been made towards ending the political stalemate and towards allowing the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government.

The European Union also deplores the fact that the elections planned for November 1998 have once again been postponed and that no alternative date has so far been set. We would like to take this opportunity to call upon the Haitian authorities concerned and the political leaders to enable the Haitian people to express their wishes as soon as possible through free, fair and transparent elections. These elections should offer citizens the widest range of opinions and choices in order to build their confidence in the democratic process. In this connection, we would like to stress the importance of democratic rules and procedures, which must be agreed upon as a matter of urgency.

I should also like to reiterate the fact that the European Union stands ready to provide electoral assistance as soon as the Government and the political parties have reached a consensus on the organization of the elections.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. A decade of social and political upheaval has resulted in the collapse of its economy and has seriously affected the very fabric of its society. A large majority of Haitians live below the threshold of absolute poverty. People's living conditions are deplorable. Environmental degradation and natural disasters such as the recent Hurricane Georges have contributed to their further deterioration. Despite some encouraging signs, the economy has not yet got off the ground since democratic rule created new opportunities for recovery in 1994.

The lack of a functioning government and the weakness of Haitian institutions have had a negative impact on law and order and, in this context, on the

protection, respect and promotion of human rights. Although some progress has been achieved in certain areas, Haiti's judicial system and National Police are, for the time being, providing only limited services to the country's population and are still largely dependent on external assistance with regard to their reform, restructuring and strengthening and to the training of personnel.

The European Union stresses the fact that tangible progress in the implementation of judicial reform leading to the establishment of an independent, impartial and effective judiciary constitutes a crucial element of the democratization process and is fundamental to democratic policing and to the fight against impunity. We therefore call upon the Haitian authorities concerned to give highest priority to the process of judicial reform.

Faced with a situation of increasing lawlessness and armed crime, a surge in drug-trafficking and sporadic incidents of civil disturbance, the Haitian National Police has tried to maintain discipline and punish abuses. However, we are still seriously concerned about reports of extrajudicial executions, acts of ill-treatment and brutality by the police and police involvement in drug-trafficking or other crimes. The European Union encourages the Haitian National Police authorities to issue a stern warning to all police personnel that violations of human rights, in particular those involving the unlawful, unnecessary or excessive use of force, will have serious consequences for the perpetrators.

The European Union notes with regret the persistence of irregularities in the prison system, including the detention of individuals after their sentences have expired, ill-treatment of detainees, the very large number of detainees who have not been convicted and appalling sanitary conditions. In this connection, we take note with interest of the establishment of the office of pre-trial detention supervision at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and would encourage an extension of this programme, as an important step in the process of restructuring the prison system.

For all these reasons, the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), whose mandate was recently extended by the Security Council by resolution 1212 (1998), the joint Organization of American States/United Nations International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), the United Nations Development Programme and a number of bilateral programmes continue to play an indispensable role in Haiti.

The European Union fully supports MIPONUH's and MICIVIH's complementary efforts to help build up and train a fully functioning, professional National Police force, to foster respect for human rights by police personnel and to improve relations between the police, communities and the judiciary.

We express our appreciation to MICIVIH for its valuable work aimed at enhancing respect for human rights through the monitoring of and technical assistance to the police force, the prison administration, the justice system and the Office of the Ombudsman, in order to consolidate democracy and assist in reforming and strengthening Haiti's judicial system. We also commend MICIVIH on its role as an active organizer and promoter of successful human rights education and awareness programmes.

The European Union therefore supports the extension of the United Nations component of MICIVIH for a period of one year with the current mandate and staff level, as recommended by the Secretary-General and requested earlier by the President of Haiti. The member States of the European Union have also co-sponsored this draft resolution.

Ms. Aguiar (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In one of the best-informed and most valuable works about the Caribbean region, entitled *El Caribe, frontera imperial*, the writer and former President of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Juan Bosch, analyses the sensitive historical relationship of the peoples of the Caribbean with the great imperial Powers over a period of more than five centuries. The author establishes that, in many cases, this system of coexistence produced unfortunate confrontations, events that stamped our region with a most distinctive character of fragmented histories and diverse cultures and languages, yet always aspiring to unity in diversity.

Recent years have yielded closer and closer relations, a tightening of the bonds that unite us as a region, an implicit recognition that we all share a common destiny. As evidence of this, our hemispheric region of Latin America and the Caribbean, almost in concert, has striven over the years to coordinate efforts to preserve and strengthen democracy, justice and human rights. We have strengthened our capacities and expanded our efforts to promote democratic reform at the regional and local levels, to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, to improve the capacities of our judicial and education systems to meet the needs of our

peoples, and to encourage the existence of well-established and active civil societies.

We are committed to defending democracy against the grave threats of corruption, terrorism and illicit drugs, while also promoting peace and security among our nations, mindful of the fact that our commitment to the principles of democracy will make it possible for us to create a hemisphere of shared values and of unity within diversity.

The delegation of the Dominican Republic has ventured to give this account of some of the policies that we are working to develop and strengthen at the regional level in order to highlight the clear and binding regional character of the future of democracy and human rights in Haiti. Here I should like to recall the words of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, delivered on the occasion of the ad hoc meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Port-au-Prince in 1995. He stated,

> "Our region must offer assistance in response to the events that have taken place in Haiti. In doing this we shall once again be expressing our adherence to the aim of a democratic and prosperous Haiti. In fact, we will be signing a covenant of support for democracy in the Americas."

It is in the light of these realities that we in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as neighbouring countries sharing a single border, have stepped up and expanded our relations of cooperation and friendship by concluding a series of technical-exchange agreements in the areas of tourism, farming and livestock-raising, trade and investment, sports and migration. In this new context of our bilateral relations a Dominican President visited the neighbouring Republic of Haiti for the first time in more than half a century. This event, viewed together with the agreements we have entered into, shows the resolve and the efforts undertaken by our Governments to work together to forge the right path for tackling the problems we share.

In his report in document A/53/564, the Secretary-General recognizes the efforts of the Haitian authorities, with the valuable support of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), to enhance respect for human rights. In its activities in support of the Haitian Government's efforts, in the last year MICIVIH has carried out a broad range of activities in the area of supervision and technical assistance for the police, the administration of justice and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as a wide range of programmes promoting human rights.

In March 1998, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recognized, in its general information on the situation in Haiti, that the Haitian Government had shown respect for the legitimacy of human rights. Although problems still persist in this area, the Commission itself agrees that in most cases these cases stem from structural shortcomings inherited from the past. Similarly, the Commission praises the advances made in this regard, thanks to the creation of the Office of the Inspector General, responsible for investigating abuses by police officers, and the opening of the Magistrates School and the national penal unit, both responsible for assisting in trials dealing with violations of human rights.

These advances notwithstanding, President Preval, in his letter dated 6 November 1998 addressed to the Secretary-General, recognizes that the task of institutional consolidation in the Republic of Haiti is not yet complete. Thus, in this new stage, MICIVIH must adapt its mandate to the current needs for strengthening the democratic institutions in Haiti to promote the establishment of a climate that will bring about the long-term consolidation of institutional democracy in Haiti.

Taking into account all these facts and the Security Council decision of 25 November 1998, in its resolution 1212 (1998), to extend the mandate of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) until 30 November 1999, the delegation of the Dominican Republic believes that now is a very opportune time to adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.57. In doing so, we will be reaffirming our commitment to the search for legitimacy and the need to forge a future of coexistence, solidarity and progress for all Haitians. In formalizing this commitment to the future, we will be fulfilling our duty of pledging ourselves to the future of democracy in Haiti.

The Dominican Republic takes the view that the international community has a fundamental responsibility in respect of the actions of Governments and peoples. This is why we are directly focusing our attention once again on the need for international organizations and their member States to contribute to this collective endeavour to establish democracy and to strengthen institutionality in the Republic of Haiti.

Future generations will remember the General Assembly for the leadership capacity, vision and determination that it has shown as it seeks to guide Haiti towards a new horizon of peace and development — for the good of Haiti itself and for the Americas as a whole.

(*spoke in French*)

Albert Camus said,

"If man fails to reconcile justice and freedom, he has failed at everything."

If Haiti fails, then we will all have failed, too.

Mr. Giroux (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to speak in the debate on agenda item 43, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", following which the General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.57, which we hope will be unanimous.

But first of all, allow me to express our appreciation and thanks to the personnel of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), which, under the direction of Mr. Colin Granderson, who should again be congratulated on his exceptional and unfailing contribution, continues to play a key role in the promotion of human rights and the strengthening of institutions in Haiti.

The efforts of MICIVIH in the areas of prison administration, the judiciary, the Haitian National Police and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as its active role in the organization and promotion of education programmes and human rights awareness programmes, are essential building blocks in the process of strengthening the rule of law and the consolidation of democracy in Haiti.

Undeniable progress has been achieved in Haiti in the area of human rights in recent years. However, we note, as do the Secretary-General and President Preval, that this progress remains fragile in the absence of well-established institutions. The task of institution-building is far from over, and the draft resolution before us today reflects this fact. Institution-building remains the priority task of MICIVIH, primarily through the provision of technical assistance to the various bodies of the justice system in the process of its reform.

In this respect, I wish to mention in particular the urgent need to continue reforming the justice system. This reform remains essential in order to promote respect for human rights, to professionalize the police and to strengthen institutions in Haiti. Canada adds its voice to the appeal to the Haitian authorities to mobilize the necessary political will to ensure the continuation of the reform, thus enabling MICIVIH to bring its experience and expertise to the exercise. We cannot stress enough the importance of the Haitian authorities' role in putting judicial reform on track and seeing it through to a successful conclusion, for without this reform the assistance of the international community would not have the desired effect.

The activities of MICIVIH in the area of protection, promotion and respect for human rights in Haiti should also be maintained for one more year. As the Secretary-General underlines in his latest report, the monitoring of human rights and strengthening of institutions go hand in hand. We subscribe entirely to this conclusion, as well as to the recommendation of the Secretary-General to maintain MICIVIH's activities for another year, as requested by President Préval.

This is the aim of draft resolution A/53/L.57, and Canada firmly supports it.

The close cooperation between the various bilateral and multilateral entities that are participating in the strengthening of Haitian institutions, particularly police training, is essential to ensure complementarity in the efforts being made. For example, MICIVIH's support for judicial reform is essential to the efforts of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), whose mandate was recently extended by the Security Council, and to the efforts of States participating in the professionalization of the Haitian National Police. Conversely, MIPONUH is giving MICIVIH logistical and administrative support. MICIVIH has also taken part in activities undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to improve coordination between United Nations bodies working in Haiti. MICIVIH is also an outstanding example of close cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

In this regard, we note that in mid-May 1999 the Secretary-General will be submitting conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly on ways in which the international community can continue to help in the tasks assigned to MICIVIH. We welcome the dovetailing of this exercise with that of the Security Council, by which the Secretary-General is requested to submit recommendations on setting up a mechanism that

can take over from MIPONUH. This convergence is not a coincidence. It is clear that the two exercises should be conducted in tandem, with the sole objectives of preserving the progress made and of strengthening United Nations support for the consolidation of democracy and respect for human rights in Haiti.

The protracted political deadlock in Haiti is seriously mitigating the effect of the efforts that have been made. Haiti has been without a Prime Minister for 18 months. Canada remains very concerned about this situation and its negative impact on the politics, economy and society of Haiti. We strongly urge the authorities and political leaders to pursue their efforts to find a compromise that will end the political crisis and enable the choice of a Prime Minister, a Cabinet and a government programme.

It is important that these efforts bear fruit as soon as possible, in keeping with the Constitution, the law and the democratic choice of Haiti. It is equally important that the people of Haiti enjoy soon the opportunity to express its will through free, fair and transparent elections, in keeping with the Haitian Constitution.

Canada is seriously committed to participating in the promotion of democracy, justice and the observance of human rights in Haiti. We are convinced that MICIVIH is a useful and effective tool to that end.

Mr. Boucher (Barbados): I have the honour to speak in support of draft resolution A/53/L.57 on the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti on behalf of members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are States Members of the United Nations.

CARICOM States welcome the positive response of the Security Council to the request of the President of Haiti that it renew the mandate of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti, allowing it to continue for another year its commendable work in professionalizing the Haitian Police. In this connection, let me also express our appreciation for the excellent job which is being done by the United Nations Civilian Mission and to the friends of Haiti for their sustained support. We have taken note of the report of the independent expert contained in A/53/355, as well as of that of the Secretary-General contained in A/53/564. Together, they provide a useful overview of the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti.

CARICOM States have been persistent in their appeal to the international community to stay the course with Haiti in the long and difficult journey ahead. We recognize that the task is compounded by the absence of a culture of democracy, human rights and development through almost 200 years of national independence and that, given these initial conditions, progress will be slow and uneven. However, while the independent expert concludes that the situation of human rights has improved, he strongly emphasizes the urgent need for greater progress in several critical areas of concern and makes a number of recommendations in this regard.

The independent expert cites, in particular, the weakness of institutions in the administration of justice as the priority area for international support in transforming Haitian society, and the incapacity of the judicial system to deal effectively with the violation of human rights — in particular, women's rights and the rights of the child — the impunity enjoyed by human rights offenders, the lack of professionalism of the National Police and the deterioration of conditions in prisons. He underlines the importance to national healing of progress in these areas — progress that would help foster the needed perception that justice is not only being served, but is seen to be served.

We recognize that gains in human rights and democracy must be reinforced by tangible improvement in the living conditions of the Haitian people, the vast majority of whom have not shared in the fruits of development. Estimates by the World Bank put gross domestic product growth in 1998 at 2.5 per cent. Since this is just slightly higher than the population growth rate, per capita income growth will remain virtually stagnant. With private investment at a mere 5 per cent of gross domestic product, there are no signs of a strong economic recovery in the near term. On top of all this, Hurricane Georges ravaged the productive agricultural region of the country, leaving more than 250 dead. We extend our sympathy to the Government and people of Haiti as they cope with further suffering and hardship.

CARICOM States share the deep concern of the international community with the policy vacuum in Haiti. For more than 18 months, Haiti has not been able to choose a Prime Minister. In this climate, it has not been possible to formulate a national development strategy which sets out the policy priorities on which international assistance should be based. Yet such a strategy is crucial to addressing, in a comprehensive fashion, the country's social and economic problems so as to accelerate growth and reduce poverty. In addition, implementation of the project pipeline is being hampered by the political crisis which has gripped the country for much too long. Urgent

steps must be taken to arrest further deterioration of the project portfolio so as to increase disbursements and add new projects in support of such basic needs as education, health and nutrition.

CARICOM States are reaching out to Haiti to effect its smooth economic and political integration into the Community. During April and May 1998, a CARICOM secretariat mission visited Haiti to assist in the preparation of the terms and conditions of Haiti's membership. These negotiations continued at CARICOM Headquarters in November. At this very moment, the Chairman of CARICOM, Mr. Kenneth Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, is visiting Haiti to discuss with authorities the political and economic situation and to assess the scope and nature of CARICOM assistance and support. While the legal terms and conditions of Haiti's membership are still being worked out, Haiti enjoys full participation in all the political and development forums of the Community.

We believe that the process of democracy and social and economic reconstruction in Haiti have reached a critical stage. The draft resolution before us reaffirms the commitment of the international community to continue its assistance to Haiti. It underlines the risks for democracy, economic and social development and respect for human rights of the prolonged political crisis, and urges the political authorities to come to grips with the situation without further delay. At the same time, it calls on the international community to stay the course with Haiti, given the fragility of the political, social and economic situations. Haiti faces a formidable task, but it enjoys much international goodwill, which it must foster and preserve. Haiti must redouble its efforts to secure its democratic future and make the right to development, too long denied, a reality for all its people. CARICOM partners remain committed to lending their support.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): My sincere greetings to the Assembly, which is meeting today to consider agenda item 43, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", accounts of which are given in two different reports: that presented to the Third Committee by Mr. Adama Dieng, on 4 November 1998, and the recent report of the Secretary-General, dated 18 November 1998, which is before members in document A/53/564.

Allow me to express my thanks to all those who, through their work in this area, have demonstrated their concern for this issue: the Secretary-General, his Special Representative in Haiti, the Executive Director of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), the Friends of the Secretary-General on this question, the member countries of the European Union, the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and, in particular, those of the Caribbean Community.

We agree with the evaluations contained in the reports referred to above, which reflect both the positive and negative developments in the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti. It is now vital that democracy begin to yield results and that it not be associated with misery, anguish and impatience, which tend to give rise to the dangerous process of authoritarianism. As mentioned by preceding speakers, the economic situation of the country is not advancing at the desired pace, and it has been worsened by the havoc wreaked on the most important agricultural production area of the country by hurricane Georges, which caused more than 250 deaths and material losses amounting to more than $500 million.

Haiti also faces a complex institutional crisis, and the protracted lack of a head of Government is one of its main manifestations. We are aware of the frustration involved in this situation both for Haitians and for our friends in the international community, who are accompanying us in our difficult transition to democracy. It is undeniable that the situation is not conducive to satisfying the people's thirst for justice and their aspirations to economic and social development, and it tends to generate certain negative consequences for the human rights situation in the country. But respect for the rules of democracy and constitutional order requires that we not rush impatiently into making decisions that could give rise to serious problems in the future. Negotiations are under way. A special session of Parliament has been convened to debate this question and to find a solution within the requirements of our constitutional order.

In his letter of 6 November addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, stressed that since the return to constitutional order, the Haitian State has benefited from the cooperation of the United Nations International Civilian Mission, whose analysis of the human rights situation has always been complemented by constructive recommendations to improve the functioning of key institutions that promote and protect individuals' rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Haitian State welcomes the progress made in raising awareness of the population concerning human rights and encourages initiatives designed to build society

around civic values and forms of conduct. We must also note, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, that the National Police has continued to make progress in maintaining order, that crowd control units are demonstrating increasing professionalism and that statistics show that the forces of order have made more moderate use of their weapons.

We cannot fail to note the negative impact of the repatriation of criminals of Haitian origin following completion of their sentences in North American prisons. These individuals, although born in Haiti, generally no longer have ties to the country and have no relatives or infrastructure that will receive them there, and they immediately form a criminal class that is sophisticated by local standards of criminal practices and capacities. In 1998 alone, more than 500 criminals have been sent back to Haiti, equalling one tenth of the National Police force.

The size of that police force must be taken into account in evaluating its performance. For, numbering 6,000 officers, the Haitian National Police has one agent for every 1,200 inhabitants, a much lower ratio than that of nations of a similar size, nations that are not at the same time undergoing a complete restructuring.

However, without denying the efforts made and the progress achieved, it must be acknowledged that much remains to be done. We continue to face the great challenge of establishing the rule of law, for which an honest, fair and effective judicial system is a key element. In his letter, President Préval underscores that the task of institutional consolidation is not yet complete. In this respect, the conclusion of a document presenting a strategy and a detailed plan of action for the implementation of the recently enacted judicial reform law should speed up the process of strengthening the judicial system in the years to come. In this context, MICIVIH, with its expertise and experience, will be able to facilitate implementation of the reform and to work with the judicial system in striving for greater impartiality, strengthened independence and systematic respect for constitutional guarantees.

Therefore, the Haitian Government hopes MICIVIH will continue its activities for another year, until 31 December 1999. Draft resolution A/53/L.57, submitted for members' consideration, responds to these concerns, and we call for its unanimous adoption.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.57.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.57?

Draft resolution A/53/L.57 was adopted (resolution 53/95).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 43.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.